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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of the Student Literacy Corps Project is to: (1) improve the literacy skills of approximately 200 educationally disadvantaged children and increase the parents' involvement in their children's literacy development; (2) provide a tutoring experience for approximately 45 undergraduate students and a coaching experience for approximately 25 graduate students; and (3) improve the quality of staff development provided for approximately 25 middle school in-service teachers dealing with educationally disadvantaged students. The project is also designed to foster collaborative efforts among university professors, school principals, in-service teachers, and graduate and undergraduate students. During the first year (1990-91), 22 undergraduate students, enrolled in a year-long literacy course, are engaged in initiating an after-school Literacy Enrichment Tutoring Program for 96 educationally disadvantaged children (in grades one through nine) and the children's parents. The undergraduate tutors are coached and mentored by nine graduate students enrolled in a year-long literacy course. Twelve in-service teachers enrolled in a year-long school-based staff development literacy course are observing and/or participating in the literacy program. During the second year (1991-92), a second cohort of teachers and undergraduate and graduate students will initiate another program in a second school. The project employs multiple data sources to address specific program objectives. (Eleven appendixes consisting of teacher, student, and parent questionnaires or evaluation measures are attached.) (RS)

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Student Literacy Corps Project

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University of South Carolina

Student Literacy Corps Project

We are a nation at risk not necessarily because an overwhelming number of children are developing less than adequate literacy skills, but because we as a nation are failing to resolve this problem (A Nation At Risk; 1983; Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988). Despite thousands of federal and state dollars poured over the past ten years into special projects and programs for teachers and students, we are not making sufficient progress toward eradicating illiteracy. The dilemma is twofold. First, elementary and secondary teachers are totally unprepared for dealing with an increasing number of children experiencing difficulty with learning how to read and write and new teachers entering the workforce are equally as unprepared (Jacobson, 1986; A Nation Prepared, 1986). Second, most supplemental support programs designed to help these children become more literate lack substance and/or theoretical basis.

If we are to have any serious impact on illiteracy over the next ten years, then three major problems must be addressed. First, the quality of instruction provided in undergraduate reading methods courses must improve so new teachers entering the workforce are more effectively prepared to deal with educationally disadvantaged children and their parents (Herrmann & Duffy, 1989; Martin, 1989). Second, the quality of staff development programs for inservice teachers must improve so these teachers are better prepared to deal with today's literacy problems (Roehler & Duffy, 1988). Third, the quality of supplemental support programs for educationally disadvantaged children and their parents must improve so they have a more longitudinal effect on these children's literacy development. This project

represents a beginning in this direction.

Background

In 1987 The University of South Carolina College of Education Reading Program developed a year-long after-school Literacy Enrichment Tutoring Program designed to meet the reading and writing needs of disadvantaged children in grades 1-8. Over the past three years the program has operated on an "adopt-a-school" basis whereby each year, approximately 50 educationally disadvantaged children from an adopted school and neighboring schools participate in small-group literacy tutoring provided by graduate students enrolled in two back-to-back reading methods courses.

In the short run, the tutorial program is successful in providing valuable assistance to children enrolled each year and a rich field-based experience for graduate students learning how to provide more effective literacy instruction. In the long run, however, the program is having little impact on illiteracy in South Carolina. To have a more serious impact on illiteracy, the program must be expanded to include undergraduate student tutors, inservice teachers, and parents. A $45,750 U.S. Department of Education Student Literacy Corps Program grant is providing the basis for this program expansion.

Purpose of the Student Literacy Corps Project

The primary purpose of this project is to (1) improve the literacy skills of approximately 200 educationally disadvantaged children and increase their parents' involvement in their children's literacy development (2) provide a tutoring experience for approximately 45 undergraduate students and a coaching experience for approximately 25 graduate students and (3) improve the quality of staff development provided for approximately 25 middle school inservice teachers

dealing with educationally disadvantaged children. The project is also designed to foster collaborative efforts among university professors, school principals, inservice teachers, and graduate and undergraduate students.

Project Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of this project is to help the (a) undergraduate and graduate students and inservice teachers learn how to provide effective literacy instruction, (b) graduate students and the inservice teachers learn how to provide effective coaching and mentoring, (c) parents become more involved in their children's developing literacy and (d) children become more literate. Specific objectives for participants are outlined in the following sections.

Objectives for Children

1. To improve the children's conceptual understandings of reading and writing processes.
2. To improve the children's strategic reasoning ability during reading and writing.
3. To build enthusiasm for reading and writing.

Objectives for Parents

1. To increase parents' awareness of the importance of their involvement in their children's developing literacy.
2. To increase parents' involvement in their children's developing literacy.

Objectives for Undergraduate Students

1. To improve the students' conceptual understandings of effective literacy instruction and the importance of parent involvement in their children's developing literacy.
2. To improve the students' ability to develop and implement effective literacy instruction grounded in traditional (skills-based) theories and current theories of

cognition and whole language.

3. To improve the students' ability to communicate with parents.

Objectives for Graduate Students

1. To improve the students' conceptual understandings of effective literacy instruction grounded in traditional (skills-based) theories and current theories of cognition and whole language.
2. To improve the students' conceptual understandings of and ability to provide effective coaching and mentoring.

Objectives for Inservice Teachers

1. To improve the teachers' conceptual understandings of and ability to develop and implement effective literacy instruction grounded in traditional (skills-based) theories and current theories of cognition and whole language.
2. To improve the teachers' conceptual understandings of and ability to provide effective coaching and mentoring.

General Plan of Operation

During Year 1 (1990 -1991) 22 undergraduate students enrolled in a year-long literacy course are initiating an after-school Literacy Enrichment Tutoring Program for 96 educationally disadvantaged children in grades 1-9 and the children's parents. The undergraduate tutors are coached and mentored by nine graduate students enrolled in a year-long literacy course. Twelve inservice teachers enrolled in a year-long school-based staff development literacy course are observing and/or participating in the literacy program. During Year 2 (1991 - 1992), a second cohort of inservice teachers will team with the Year 1 inservice teachers to learn how to provide more effective literacy instruction for their educationally disadvantaged students; a second cohort of undergraduate and graduate students will initiate

another after-school Literacy Enrichment Tutoring Program in a second school.

Description of the Literacy Courses

Two innovative year-long literacy courses were developed for this project. First, two undergraduate reading methods courses and two graduate reading methods courses were restructured to create a year-long literacy course for both the undergraduate and graduate students. The course meets two nights a week for 30 weeks and it is being taught in five phases: (a) Phase I: Preparation Phase [August -October], (b) Phase II: Tutoring Phase Part I [October-April], (c) Phase III: Reflection Phase [January], (d) Phase IV: Tutoring Phase Part II [February-mid-April], (e) Phase V: Reflection Phase [Mid-April-End of April]. Second, a year-long, school-based staff development literacy course was developed for the inservice teachers. The course is based on a modified version of the undergraduate/graduate literacy course. The staff development course meets weekly for 30 weeks and includes observations in the Literacy Tutoring Program and extensive observations and demonstrations by the teacher educator in the inservice teachers' classrooms. Both courses focus on developing and implementing effective literacy instruction grounded in traditional (skills-based) theories and current theories of cognition and whole language.

Both courses are theoretically driven by current understandings of essential schools (Sizer, 1990), teacher-researcher partnerships (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990), whole language (Watson, 1989), teacher empowerment (Holmes Group, 1986) and collegial coaching (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990). As such, the courses are unique for several reasons. First, underlying course themes include (a) teacher thinking and decision-making, (b) student-as-worker rather than teacher as-deliverer-of-instructional-services and (c) risk-taking. Second, emphasis is placed on a

limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge and teacher education practices are tailored to meet the needs of every tutor, coach and teacher. Third, the course is designed to facilitate systematic inquiry and reflection on the part of the tutors, coaches and teachers through collaborative experiences that allow them to assume responsibility for their own learning. For example, within the context of authentic teaching experiences the tutors, coaches and teachers collaboratively explore traditional (skills-based) and current theories of cognition and whole language, implications these theories have for instruction and materials, but more importantly ways to merge these three theories currently dominating the literacy field. Fourth, emphasis is placed on teacher metacognitive control of instruction and teacher empowerment. For example, both courses focus on several literacy instructional models, programs and curricula, but it is up to the tutors and the teachers to decide what their instructional programs look like including instructional approaches, materials and curriculum. Finally, both courses include a collegial coaching component (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990) whereby the teachers engage in on-going professional dialogue to improve their practice and alter their organizational context in such a way as to assist that improvement.

Evaluation Plan

This project employs multiple data sources used to confirm and/or illuminate one another relative to specific project objectives. Data are being collected for ten undergraduate students, five graduate students, three inservice teachers, and ten children and their parents randomly selected from among the Literacy Enrichment Tutoring Program participants.

Data are collected on a pre, mid and post basis through the use of teacher and student concept questionnaires/interviews, teacher concept webs, teacher tutoring

questionnaires, parent questionnaires and student enthusiasm questionnaires. On an on-going basis data are collected through the use of teacher pre-lesson planning guides and post-lesson questionnaires, teacher journals, student post-lesson questionnaires, and informal interviews and discussions. At the end of the study data collected on a pre, mid and post basis will be analyzed by two graduate students trained to use criteria and scoring procedures outlined by Herrmann & Duffy (1989). Data collected on an on-going basis will be used to provide supportive evidence of the teachers' movement toward effective literacy instruction, the parents' movement toward increased involvement in their children's developing literacy and the children's movement toward literacy. Data sources for each of the project objectives are outlined in the following sections.

Evaluation of the Children

1. Conceptual understandings of reading and writing processes (pre, mid and post student concept questionnaires - Appendix A).
2. Strategic reasoning ability during reading and writing (three student post-lesson questionnaires - Appendix B).
3. Enthusiasm for reading and writing (pre, mid and post student enthusiasm questionnaires - Appendices C and D).

Evaluation of the Parents

1. Awareness of the importance of their involvement in their children's developing literacy (pre, mid and post parent questionnaires - Appendix E; Parent post -session questionnaires - Appendix F; parent journals; comments made during parent interviews and informal discussions).
2. Involvement in their children's developing literacy (pre, mid and post parent questionnaires - Appendix E; parent journals; comments made during parent

interviews and informal discussions).

Evaluation of the Undergraduate Students

1. Conceptual understandings of effective literacy instruction and the importance of parent involvement (pre, mid and post teacher concept questionnaires - Appendix G; pre, mid and post concept webs - Appendix H).
2. Ability to develop and implement effective literacy instruction (three teacher pre lesson planning guides - Appendix I; three teacher post-lesson questionnaires - Appendix J).
3. Ability to communicate with parents (informal observations of parent sessions).

Evaluation of Graduate Students

1. Conceptual understandings of effective literacy instruction (pre, mid and post mentor concept questionnaires - Appendix K).
2. Conceptual understandings of and ability to provide effective coaching and mentoring (teacher journals; informal observations of coaching sessions).

Objectives for Inservice Teachers

1. Conceptual understandings of and ability to develop and implement effective literacy instruction (pre, mid and post concept questionnaires - Appendix G); three teacher pre-planning guides - Appendix I; three teacher post-lesson questionnaires - Appendix J).
2. Conceptual understandings of and ability to develop and implement effective coaching and mentoring (teacher journals; informal observations of coaching sessions).

Impact

This project will impact both schools and teacher education programs in South Carolina in three ways. First, while the project certainly will not eradicate illiteracy

on a state-wide basis, it will seriously impact the literacy needs of a number of educationally disadvantaged children who have all but given up on school success. Second, while we are not in a position to affect all the South Carolina inservice teachers who want to improve their reading and writing instruction, we will provide much needed preparation for a number of teachers who will then be in a better position to mentor and coach others who are not directly involved with the project. Finally, while this project does not directly effect teacher education programs on a state-wide basis, it will have a serious impact on the reading teacher education program at the state's major university which provides leadership and guidance across the state.

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Appendix A

Student Concept Questionnaire

1. Look at this chapter (give student a content area chapter). Now that you looked the chapter over, you can see that it is a textbook. Do you do anything differently to read a book like this as opposed to a story you are reading as a library book?

2. Do you do anything before you read a book like this? If so, what?

3. If you couldn't read a word, what would you do?

4. If you didn't understand what you were reading what would you do?

5. When you finish reading this chapter, what would you do then?

Appendix B

Student Post-Lesson Questionnaire

1. What was your teacher teaching you today?

2. Why is it important?

3. When will you use it?

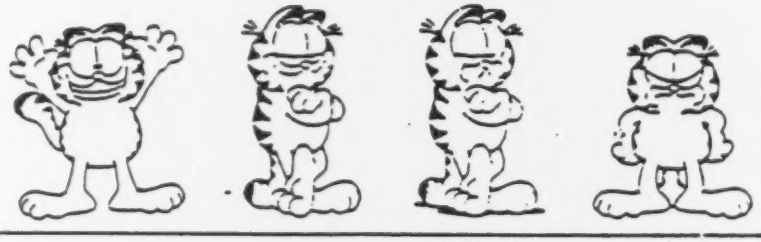
4. How will you do it (i.e., if you were showing someone else how to do this, what would you tell them to do?)?

5. How will what you learned today help you become a better reader or writer?

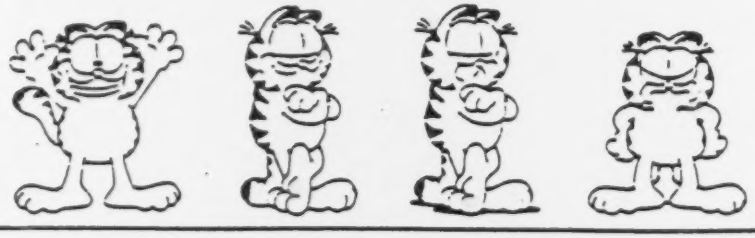
Appendix C

Student Enthusiasm Measure

3. How do you feel about reading for fun at home?



4. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?



5. How do you feel about spending free time reading?

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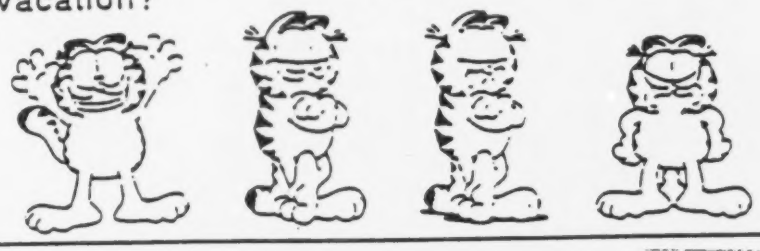
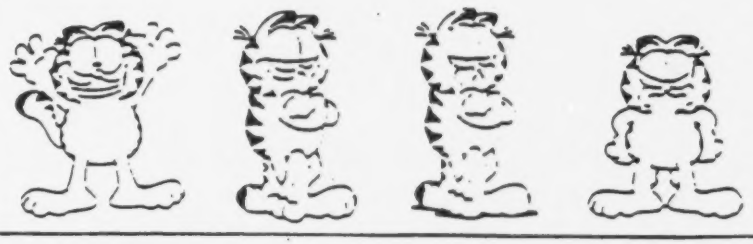
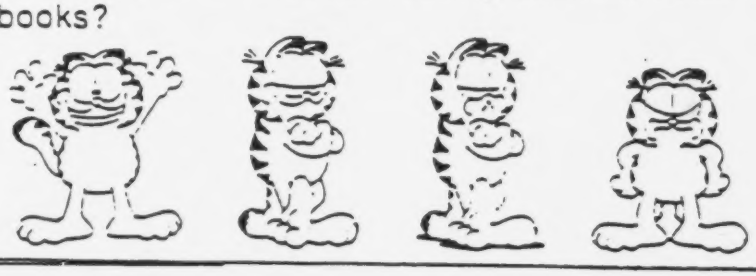
7. How do you feel about reading during summer vacation?



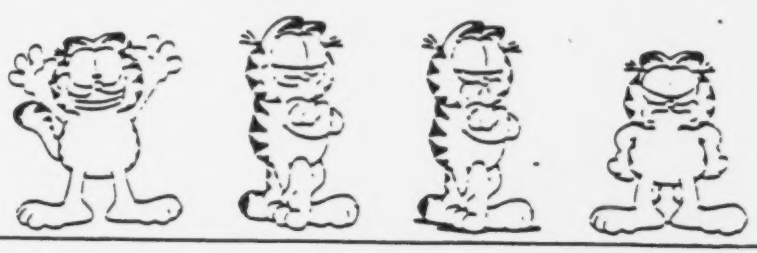
8. How do you feel about reading instead of playing?



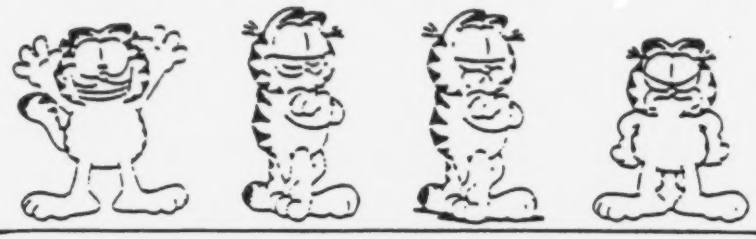
10. How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?



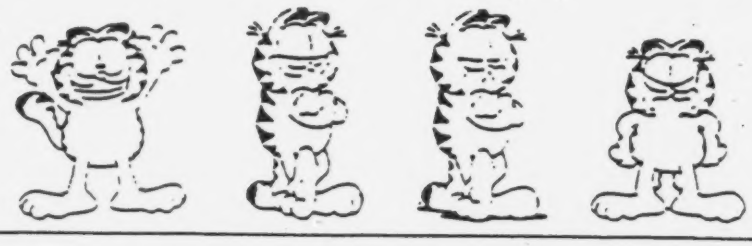
13. How do you feel about reading in school?



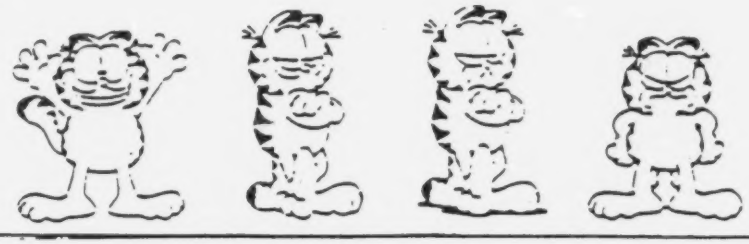
14. How do you feel about reading your school books?



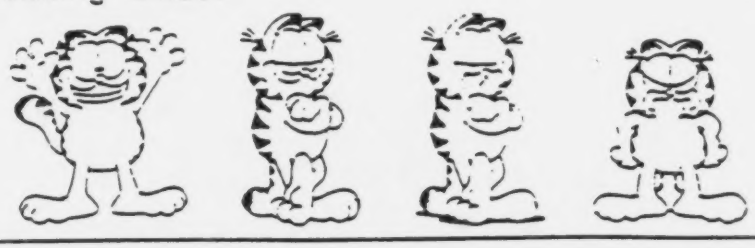
15. How do you feel about learning from a book?



16. How do you feel when it's time for reading class?



17. How do you feel about the stories you read in reading class?



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18. How do you feel when you read out loud in class?

Appendix D

Student Enthusiasm Measure

1. I enjoy my reading lessons.

   1 2 3 4 5

2. Reading in boring.

   1 2 3 4 5

3. Reading is my best subject in school.

   1 2 3 4 5

4. I don't care about reading better.

   1 2 3 4 5

5. I'm embarrassed to read in front of people.

   1 2 3 4 5

6. I like to read about new ideas.

   1 2 3 4 5

7. I try hard to understand new material when I read.

   1 2 3 4 5

8. I really like to read at home.

   1 2 3 4 5

9. As I learn new ways to think about reading, I am more interested in reading.

   1 2 3 4 5

10. I enjoy answering questions about stories I read.

    1 2 3 4 5

11. I don't learn much when I read.

    1 2 3 4 5

12. I like to read hard books.

    1 2 3 4 5

13. I like to read aloud.

1 2 3 4 5

14. When I read hard books, I feel smart.

1 2 3 4 5

15. Reading is easy for me.

1 2 3 4 5

16. When I read about new ideas, I feel smart.

1 2 3 4 5

17. I can tell other people about the books I read.

1 2 3 4 5

18. I like to understand the important ideas when I read.

1 2 3 4 5

19. Learning new ways to think about reading makes me like reading more.

1 2 3 4 5

20. When I figure out difficult words or ideas in a story, I feel smart.

1 2 3 4 5

21. It is hard for me to answer questions about stories I read.

1 2 3 4 5

22. I don't think I read well.

1 2 3 4 5

23. I like to read when it makes sense.

1 2 3 4 5

24. I like to tell other people about books I read.

1 2 3 4 5

25. Reading at home is something I do well.

1 2 3 4 5

26. I like to read in front of people.

1 2 3 4 5

27. I can read harder books than I used to.

1 2 3 4 5

28. No matter how hard I try, reading either makes sense or it doesn't.

1 2 3 4 5

29. The worst part of school is reading.

1 2 3 4 5

30. I know I am learning to read better.

1 2 3 4 5

31. It is hard for me to understand the important ideas when I read.

1 2 3 4 5

32. My parents are pleased with my reading.

1 2 3 4 5

33. I like to figure out difficult words or ideas in a story.

1 2 3 4 5

34. I am good at reading aloud.

1 2 3 4 5

35. I like to read because I learn a lot.

1 2 3 4 5

36. I like to read at home.

1 2 3 4 5

Appendix E

Parent Questionnaire

Please respond to each statement by circling the best number. Comment where necessary to explain your response.

1. A good reader is someone who never misses a word.

1	2	3	4	5
(do not agree)				(agree)

Comments:

2. A good reader is someone who reads alot.

1	2	3	4	5
(do not agree)				(agree)

Comments:

3. A good reader always understands what he/she reads.

1	2	3	4	5
(do not agree)				(agree)

Comments:

4. A good reader is good at sounding out hard words.

1	2	3	4	5
(do not agree)				(agree)

Comments:

5. A good reader enjoys reading.

1	2	3	4	5
(do not agree)				(agree)

Comments:

6. Do you read for fun at home?

1 (not much) 2 3 4 5 (alot)

Comments:

7. Does your child read for fun at home?

1 (not much) 2 3 4 5 (alot)

Comments:

8. Do you like to read?

1 (not much) 2 3 4 5 (alot)

Comments:

9. Does your child like to read?

1 (not much) 2 3 4 5 (alot)

Comments:

10. How confident are you with helping your child become a better reader?

1 (not much) 2 3 4 5 (alot)

Comments:

11. Does your family value reading for fun?

1 (not much) 2 3 4 5 (alot)

Comments:

12. Would your family miss your television if it broke down?

1	2	3	4	5
(not much)				(alot)

Comments:

13. How much does your child watch television?

1	2	3	4	5
(not much)				(alot)

Comments:

14. Do you keep track of how much your child reads at home?

1	2	3	4	5
(not much)				(alot)

Comments:

15. How important are you in your child's literacy development?

1	2	3	4	5
(not much)				(alot)

Comments:

16. Does your family ever get together to read for fun?

1	2	3	4	5
(not much)				(alot)

Comments:

17. How much time does your child spend in the public library?

1	2	3	4	5
(not much)				(alot)

Comments:

18. How much do you read to your child?

1	2	3	4	5
(not much)				(alot)

Comments:

19. How much do you visit with your child's teacher about his/her reading progress?

1	2	3	4	5
(not much)				(alot)

Comments:

Appendix F

Parent Post-Session Questionnaire

1. What was the teacher teaching you today?

2. Why is it important?

3. When will you use it?

4. How will what you learned today help you/help your child be a better reader or writer?

Appendix G

Teacher Concept Questionnaire

1. Define literacy.

2. What is the overall purpose (goal) of literacy instruction?

3. What are some things teachers should do to provide effective literacy instruction?

   Of these, which are the most important? Why?

4. What are some things teachers should have students do to learn how to become more literate?

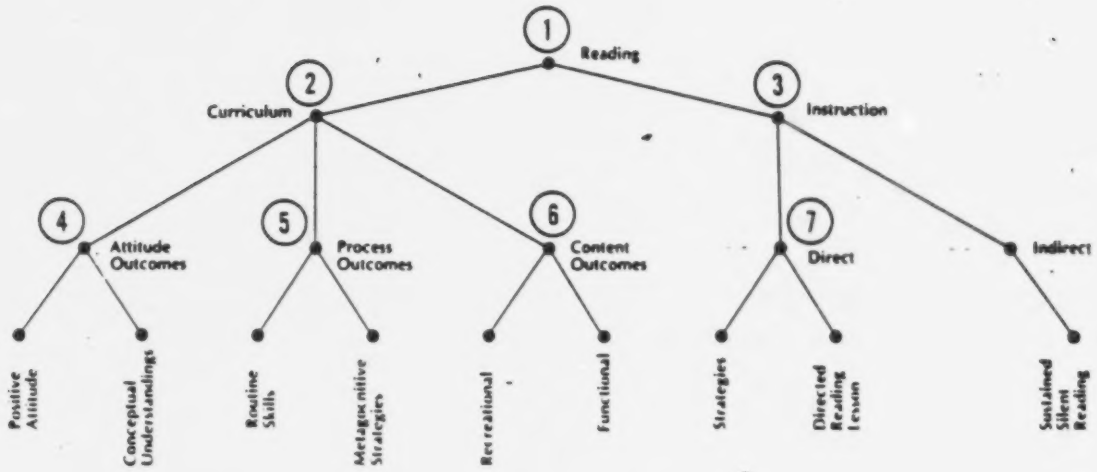
   Of these, which are the most important? Why?

5. How should teachers judge students' success in reading? Why?

6. What kinds of things in a classroom setting are most important for helping students become more literate (e.g., groups, seatwork, bulletin boards)?

Appendix H

Sample Concept Web About Reading



Directions for constructing a concept web:

1. Brainstorm and list terms and phrases about effective literacy instruction.
2. Group the terms and phrases in ways that make sense to you.
3. On a piece of paper show how the groups are related to each other.
4. Briefly describe why you constructed the web the way you did.

Appendix I

Teacher Pre Lesson Planning Guide

Part I: Transforming Curriculum into Instructional Content

1. What do you hope to accomplish in this lesson (outcome)?

2. What will the students do (task)?

3. What examples (if any) will you use?

Part II: Motivation

1. What expectations do you have for the students and how will you communicate these to them?

2. What will you say to explain the usefulness of what you are teaching?

3. What cooperative learning experiences (if any) will the students participate in?

Part III: Giving Information

1. What will you say to explain:

   a. What will be taught

   b. Why it is important

   c. When it should be used

2. What will you do/say to model what is to be learned?

Part IV: Mediating Student Learning

1. What questions will you ask to determine how the students restructure the information you have provided?

2. What will you do/say to support the students and coach them?

Part V: Reflections About Planning

1. Are you consciously using new knowledge, information and/or concepts in thinking about this lesson? If so, describe them including how this is different from ways you have thought about lessons in the past.

2. Additional comments on back.

Appendix J

Teacher Post-Lesson Questionnaire

1. Did you accomplish what you were trying to accomplish? How do you know?

2. What went well? What did not go so well?

3. Will you modify your instruction next time you teach a lesson like this? If so, what and how will you modify?

4. Think about the lesson you just taught. Were you conscious of making any interactive decisions and/or actions during the lesson? If so, what were they and what were you thinking?

5. Were the decisions and/or actions you made effective? If yes, how did you know?

Appendix K

Mentor Concept Questionnaire

1. Define literacy?

2. What is the overall purpose (goal) of the literacy instruction?

3. What are some things teachers should do to provide effective literacy instruction?

   Of these, which are the most important? Why?

4. What are some things teachers should have students do to learn how to become more literate?

Of these, which are the most important? Why?

5. How should teachers judge students' success in reading? Why?

6. Envision your own classroom. What kind of things are most important for helping students become more literate (e.g., groups, seatwork, bulletin boards)?